GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:2841
ANSWERED ON:19.03.2008
PREVENTION OF OCULAR DISEASES
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Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether ocular diseases are still being treated through conventional means;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons therefor;

(c) the number of blind persons in the country expected to increase by the year 2010; and

(d) the efforts made by the Government to treat the blind persons to regain their vision/ eye-sight and the progress made as a result thereof?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR HEALTH & FAMILY WELFARE (SMT. PANABAKA LAKSHMI)

(a) & (b): All ocular diseases including cataract are being treated through modern techniques available in the field of eye care. More than 90% of the cataract surgeries in the country are being done through IOL implantation technique.

(c): There are around 12 million blind persons in the country. Cataract is the leading cause of blindness contribution around 62.6% blindness among 50+ population in the country. Since cataract is an age related disease and also considering the increased life expectancy, the number of blind persons in the country is likely to increase by the year 2010.

(d): The following efforts/steps have been taken under National Programme for Control of Blindness to treat the blind persons to regain their vision/eye sight to control blindness:-

1. Providing Eye care facilities to the needy people at Primary, Secondary and Tertiary levels through Primary Health Centres, District Hospitals, Medical Colleges and Regional Institutes of Ophthalmology.

2. Strengthening of Eye Banks in Govt./Voluntary Sector.

3. Financial support to NGOs for strengthening of their existing infrastructure for Eye care.

4. Screening of School Children for detection of refractive errors and providing free glasses to poor.

5. Strengthening of Regional Institutes of Ophthalmology and Medical Colleges by providing assistance for development of paediatric eye units/low vision units/retina units and training infrastructure.

6. Imparting training to Ophthalmic Surgeons from Government Hospitals/Medical Colleges in various specialities of Ophthalmology for quality eye care.

7. Intensification of IEC activities to create awareness about eye care activities.

As a result of the efforts made under the programme, following major achievements have been made under the programme:-

As per the Survey on Rapid Assessment of Avoidable Blindness (2007), prevalence of blindness has come down to 1%.

Cataract − During 2004-05, around 44,91,154 cataract surgeries were performed under NPCB. The performance has been improving steadily with 49,05,619 surgeries during 2005-06 and 50,40,002 surgeries during 2006-07. During the current financial year, 2007-08, around 33.30 lakh cararact surgeries have been reported by the States upto January, 2008.

Intra ocular lens (IOL) implantation has improved from 88% during 2004-05 to nearly 93% during 2006-07.

Special drive for Cataract and other comprehensive eye care activities has been initiated in N.E. region in view of the large cataract backlog in these states. As a result, around 57,000 cataract surgeries during 2005-06 and 62,145 cataract surgeries during 2006-07 were performed in these states. The activity is in progress in these states during+ the current year (2007-08).

Eye Donation − Performance of Eye Donation has also improved from 23, 553 during 2004-05 to around 30,000 during 2006-07. During the current financial 2007-08, around 17,000 donated eyes have been collected.

School Eye Screening Programme − Provision of free glasses to poor children has also increased from 2,83,070 during 2004-05 to 4,56,634 during 2006-07. During the current financial year, 2007-08, around 2.45 poor school children have been provided spectacles as per reports upto January, 2008.